

A new species of *Boiga* (Serpentes: Colubridae) from the Nicobar Archipelago

Indraneil Das*

Abstract

A new species of *Boiga* is described from the islands of Little and Great Nicobar, Bay of Bengal, India. In the literature, part of the material comprising the type series has been referred to *B. dendrophila*. The new species is diagnosed by the following suite of characters: SVL 735-1050 (mean $917 \pm \text{SE } 42.8$) mm; snout greater than orbit diameter; temporals 3 + 3; ventrals 227-233; subcaudals 77-104; hemipenis a single, subcylindrical organ, reaching subcaudal XII, with simple sulcus spermaticus, basally spinose to subcaudal VI, distally fimbriated to subcaudal XII; dorsum cinnamon, each scale edged with brownish olive; venter spectrum yellow with dark rounded blotches in the abdominal region and on subcaudals; labials unpatterned yellow; and dark postocular stripe lacking.

KEY WORDS: Colubridae; *Boiga wallachi*; new species; Nicobar Islands; India.

Introduction

Boiga Fitzinger, 1826 (type species: *Boiga irregularis* Merrem, 1802) is a speciose (> 25 nominal species; vide Rasmussen, 1979; Welch, 1988) group of colubrine snakes whose relationships are somewhat obscure. Although Leviton (1970) reviewed the contents of the genus from the Philippine Archipelago, little has appeared in the recent literature on the species found further west since Wall (1909), especially the Sundaic archipelago, mainland south-east Asia, and the Indian subcontinent, the apparent centre of radiation of the group.

A new species of *Boiga* is being described in this paper, based on a series of eight adults from the islands of Little and Great Nicobar, Bay of Bengal, India. Three of these have been reported before as *Boiga dendrophila* by Biswas and Sanyal, 1977 (see also Biswas and Sanyal, 1980). Allocation to the genus *Boiga* is based on the following characteristics: eyes large; pupil vertically narrowed; head relatively large; posterior maxillary teeth enlarged; nasal depression present; body compressed, covered with smooth, oblong oblique scales; ventrals angulate laterally, subcaudal rows double (Boulenger, 1912; De Rooij, 1917;

* Centre for Herpetology, Post Bag 4, Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu 603 104, India.